



Press Info:

SHOSTAKOVICH
Complete String Quartets
Vol. I

String Quartet No. 1 in C major, Op. 49
String Quartet No. 2 in A major, Op. 68
String Quartet No. 4 in D major, Op. 83

MANDELRING QUARTET

Sebastian Schmidt, violin
Nanette Schmidt, violin
Roland Glassl, viola
Bernhard Schmidt, violoncello

Dmitri Shostakovich's First Quartet had a surprise in store for those who knew how much all composers respect the string quartet genre. What the 32-year-old star of the Soviet composers' scene turned out in 1938 was a spring-like, worldly "quartettino," free of all heaviness and pseudo-profundity. Some observers saw it as a conscious act of "refusal," perhaps also the composer's reaction to his being reprimanded by Stalinist officials. Only six years later, in the Second Quartet (1944), did Shostakovich prove what the genre still had to offer him in terms of musical possibilities. In its form, a (neo-baroque) suite, the work took after the experimental quartets of the late Beethoven, while its language was reminiscent of Tchaikovsky. The Fourth Quartet of 1949, kept for years by the composer in his desk drawer after renewed harsh attacks, begins with a "rustic scene" and ends with a stridently furioso Finale with Jewish overtones.

With these three works, the Mandelring Quartet begins its complete recording of the fifteen string quartets of Dmitri Shostakovich – an imposing body of work unparalleled in the twentieth century for its variety and all-embracing grasp of issues.

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